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ABSTRACT

Drawing from a bibliographic survey of statistical data on two-year colleges, this digest indicates what kinds of data are available, what data are not readily accessible, and the limitations that affect the available information on two-year college finances, curriculum, students, and personnel. The digest recognizes the availability of data on total college expenditures; total enrollment; and the demographic characteristics of students, faculty, and administrators; while alerting users to the lack of data on community services and non-credit programs, student educational intent, student outcomes, and data aggregated by program or curriculum. (LAL)

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A SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

August 1985

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ERIC DIGEST
University of California, Los Angeles

August 1985

WHAT STATISTICAL INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON TWO-YEAR COLLEGES: A SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

How many full-time students are enrolled in community college vocational programs?

What is the average faculty workload of community college humanities instructors?

How many students successfully transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions?

How many community college vocational students find employment in jobs related to their course of study?

In response to these and many other requests for statistical information, a library search was conducted for all publicly available sources of state and national statistical information on two-year colleges. The search included a review of materials in ERIC, the Statistical Reference Index, the American Statistics Index, and the libraries of the University of California, Los Angeles. An annotated bibliography of materials found in the search was compiled, as was a subject index to the data provided in those materials (Palmer, 1984). Based on the findings of this search, this **ERIC Digest** presents a brief review of what data are available about two-year colleges, what data are not available, and what limitations the available data present for educational researchers.

WHAT FINANCIAL DATA ARE AVAILABLE ON TWO-YEAR COLLEGES?

Available financial data on two-year colleges are largely limited to the information collected in the annual HEGIS (Higher Education General Information Survey) surveys conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. Major categories of available data include (1) institutional expenditures, including capital outlays, fringe benefits, and salaries; (2) value of physical plant assets; (3) revenues from auxiliary enterprises, endowment income, private gifts, tuition and fees, and government appropriations; and (4) amount of financial aid received by students. In addition, most statistical reports detail annual college expenditures in seven HEGIS categories: instruction, research, public service, academic support,

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student services, institutional support and operation and maintenance of plant.

Often, researchers need to know the breakdown of institutional expenditures by curriculum (transfer, vocational, community services, remedial). Unfortunately, curricular disaggregation of expenditures is rarely available. Therefore, it is difficult to determine which of the community college functions (transfer, vocational, etc.) receives the largest portion of the college budget.

WHAT DATA ARE AVAILABLE ON THE CURRICULUM?

Many information requests received by the Clearinghouse focus on specific curricular areas. Besides financial expenditures on different subject areas, many researchers want to know how many faculty there are in different curricula, how faculty workload varies from one subject to another, how many students intend to major in different areas, and how many receive degrees in individual disciplines.

Curricular data, however are hard to come by. Some state documents and other reports generally focus on the broad areas of academic and vocational curricula. Data provided under these categories include the number of students enrolled and the number of associate degrees awarded. Of the 189 data sources reviewed, however, only 17 provide any information on community services programs and an even smaller number provide data on remedial education. Clearly, higher education data collection efforts are focused on credit programs only. **Data on community services and other non-credit programs are usually unavailable.**

WHAT DATA ARE AVAILABLE ON STUDENTS?

Most of the sources reviewed provide Fall credit enrollment data by sex, race, part-time/full-time status, and educational level (freshman, sophomore). Some states provide limited analyses of first-time entering students and of students who transfer to four-year colleges. Data available on these transfer students include grade point average at the senior institution, the number of students transferring, and the percent who complete a baccalaureate. Limited data are also available on the employment rate of vocational program graduates. It should be emphasized, however, that data on transfer students and vocational graduates are available in only a small number of state documents. National follow-up data on community college students are not readily at hand.

Researchers often request information on the educational objectives of community college students. What percent, for example, intend to transfer to a four-year institution? What percent are enrolled to prepare for a career that does not require a baccalaureate? Only scattered data are available on this educational intent question, and many of those data are unreliable (Cohen, 1979). This is a critical problem for two-year colleges; often the colleges are criticized for the low proportion of students who transfer, yet many community college students are enrolled for reasons other than pursuit of a baccalaureate.

WHAT DATA ARE AVAILABLE ON COLLEGE PERSONNEL?

Most reports detail the number, demographic characteristics, and salaries of administrators, faculty, and staff. Data on faculty characteristics present breakdowns of instructors by academic rank, highest degree earned, full-time and part-time status, tenure status, age, race, sex, and (in some cases) years of service to the college. Except for the academic rank category, data for administrators are similar. Notably absent from the data resources are measures of faculty workload and data on the characteristics of community college trustees.

As in other categories, the data on college personnel suffer from a lack of program disaggregation. Most data sources, for example, are of little help for the researcher who wants to compare the characteristics of academic program faculty and administrators with the characteristics of vocational program faculty and administrators. Also, very little information is provided on the characteristics of part-time, community services faculty.

CONCLUSION: THE LIMITATIONS OF DATA RESOURCES

Available sources of data on community colleges are useful to the researcher who needs data on total expenditures, total enrollment, and the demographic characteristics of student, faculty, and administrators. Three limitations, however, circumscribe the value of these data in more complex research problems: (1) lack of data that are disaggregated by program of study; (2) the dearth of information on the educational objectives of students, and (3) the scarcity of information on student outcomes, i.e. the academic and vocational success of transfer students and program graduates. In the final analysis, then, most available national and state data sources are of little help in determining whether community college students meet their educational objectives and in determining how the colleges allocate resources between the academic and vocational curricula in the college program.

FURTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The ERIC database includes scores of state and national documents that provide statistical information on two-year colleges. For information on how these documents can be obtained, contact Diane Zwemer, User Services Librarian, ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, 8118 Math-Sciences Building, UCLA, Los Angeles, CA 90024. The Clearinghouse telephone number is (213) 825-3931.

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